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FOOD INFORMATION

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Farm Labor Campaign

No. 7

Questions and Answers About

Making Best Use Of Labor

NO FARM labor should be wasted with the present critical farm labor shortage.

EVERY worker on farms and every new volunteer from the U. S. Crop Corps being organized by the Government must be used to best advantage.

WE MUST produce the food needed to win this war; to feed our soldiers, our allies, our war industry workers, the American public. That will take all the farm labor that can be mobilized and every bit of ingenuity the farmer can muster in using that labor to get the most production.

THE cooperative Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture and the State agricultural colleges, along with labor mobilization, will conduct an intensified educational and demonstration program in every county to help farmers appreciate the necessity for most efficient use of all labor, train new workers, and save labor through job simplification, cutting out unnecessary operations, and otherwise practicing sound farm planning and farm management.

THE FOLLOWING questions and answers show many of the ways farmers can get top production from available labor.

DISTRIBUTION - Sent to extension editors for primary information use in the States; and to War Boards and others for their information; coverage - all States.

USES - Adaptation and use in news and feature stories, on radio, house organs, visual aids, etc., and as background information for writers.

1. If everybody on a farm works hard and long hours, how can the farmer be expected to do more?

Producing the most food for the war is not only a question of how hard he works, but also how efficiently he works. Best use of labor is not measured by the clock but by output per worker per year. Speed is important but can be wasted in taking unnecessary steps.

2. If a farmer has plenty of skilled farm labor, he can produce efficiently. But how can he do it with inexperienced help?

Many jobs on the farm do require skill; others not so much. New workers who really want to help produce war foods can do many jobs immediately, learn how to do others. How long does it take to learn to drive the tractor or run the milking machine? Couldn't this be taught a new worker just as quickly?

3. Will the new workers obtained from the U. S. Crop Corps be trained for farm work before the farmer gets them?

They'll be given some special training, especially in the types of farm work they will have to do and in what life on a farm is like. The best training they can get will be the actual on-the-job training given them as they are asked by the farmer to do certain jobs. Also, we should remember that many so-called city people came from farms. They can be out of condition for farm work, but many are not inexperienced in farm life.

4. The farmer is too busy to train new workers. How can he do it quickly?

It doesn't take long to show a new worker exactly how a job is wanted done. He should be put at ease. The importance of the job and of doing it right should be explained to him. He needs to be shown slowly and clearly the key steps in doing the job. An extra 5 minutes should be spent to be sure he understands and can tell just how he is going to do it. A check made after he has done the job a short while and help given him to correct any mistakes. In this way a mighty good and much needed helper can be made out of an able, willing but inexperienced new farm worker.

5. How can the farmer get help in training new workers?

Talk with his county agricultural agent or his emergency labor assistant. They can supply helpful training literature. The agent will be conducting actual demonstrations over the county on training new labor for small groups of farmers who want information. These demonstrations will be a farm adaptation of the training method that has proved so successful in training hundreds of thousands of completely new workers to do very exacting jobs in our war industries.

6. How can he keep these new workers?

They want to help or they would not have volunteered to do farm work. They were told it was hard work, but important work. Look out for their welfare. If they will live on his farm, the farmer should provide them a good place to stay, pay them fair wages. Try to make them feel at home and a part of the community. Explain how he and they are doing important war work.

7. How can he supervise new workers and still do the job he does around the farm?

He can put experienced help, the best workers, in the key positions; not waste an experienced worker in doing chores that the new workers could quickly learn to do well; shift the workers to jobs they can do best, encourage them to show initiative.

8. If he could buy labor-saving machinery he could get by.

He can exchange use of machinery with his neighbors. They have machines he doesn't have and he has equipment they need the use of for a few days. When a farmer's crew isn't too busy and some neighbor needs help, it should be given in exchange for help needed by him later.

9. How does care of farm machinery save labor?

It should be repaired now; made ready for the rush season. We've got to make the best use of every piece of machinery. If it is allowed to wait until the farm workers need it later, they will lose time with poorly adjusted equipment, dull plow points, and the like. Machinery can be kept running longer by following a maintenance plan with lubrication. Grease cuts down wear.

10. How can the farmer plan more efficiently when his farm is just so big and he can't add to it?

If possible, he should cultivate a little more land on the farm. He might be able to add an acre or so of a market vegetable, one that won't take special equipment and would require labor at seasons when his workers were not too busy with the usual rush work. Adding a few more chickens, maybe two more cows, some pasture and a clover field for them, should be considered. Extra work can be planned to fit into the daily and slack season work of his workers without sacrificing time needed for his main enterprise. Keeping all full-time labor fully employed throughout the year is necessary for top production per worker.

11. How is good seed important in use of farm labor?

What the farmer is after is the greatest production per worker. It takes about as long to prepare a field that grows poor crops because poor or low-yielding seed were planted as it does for the highest yielding crops. He should get the highest yielding seed he can to save labor, produce more war crops, and make more profit.

12. Why does it make much difference how the fields are laid out?

Fields that are as large as possible and oblong in shape can have long rows on the contour of the hill, save time and work otherwise lost in turning around at the end of the rows. To take out fences wherever they can be removed makes fields longer. To move the lane to the pasture along the roadside is better than to let it split through and break a good field into two small irregular fields.

13. How can the farmer prevent workers from getting hurt and losing time?

Hazards should be removed that are apt to cause accidents. Bad steps, broken stepladders, holes or rotten planks in the hayloft, fire dangers, safe bull pens, many others. The workers must be taught to be careful, stop machinery before getting off, not take unnecessary chances with spirited animals, etc. Farm accidents can be avoided. If not, they cause some deaths and rob farmers of millions of hours of farm labor.

14. If his buildings are already there, how can he rearrange them to save labor?

There are many opportunities. Rearrangement of doorways, hay chutes, feed bins, ladders, all may cut out unnecessary steps in the daily work. Can the use of the building be changed to advantage? Can a feed bin be built handy to the feeding alley and located so that it can be filled from the barn floor above? Can things be arranged to save steps in carrying water or carrying feed to the poultry houses? It is a good thing to stop some time to write down all the things that have to be done and all the steps in milking, or some other operation. The list will be surprising. The items should be studied and plans changed to shorten or cut out unnecessary steps.

15. What if he doesn't have time to do proper planning?

A little time spent in carefully planning farm work, thinking jobs through to save labor, to get highest possible production per worker, will be the best time the farmer can spend. He shouldn't be satisfied to keep on doing things a certain way because it's a habit. Nothing offers a greater challenge to a farmer's ingenuity at any time, and especially in wartime, than figuring out ways to get necessary jobs done quicker and easier. Little things - an hour here, and hour there - add up in time saved, effort saved, greater war production.

16. Where can he get help in arranging work on his farm to make the best use of the labor he has?

By talking jobs over with his neighbors and others who may have new ideas and with his county agricultural agent. It is the agent's job to give such help. He can look at the farmer's operations through new eyes that have not developed the habit of seeing the job done that way for years, as the farmer has. He can bring in new ideas from his experiences on other farms and in other areas, tell how Tom Smith or Paul Jones is doing it, and what Government studies and surveys show.

*One of a series of questions and answers on the U. S. Crop Corps and the farm labor situation. Others deal with the general situation, mobilization of emergency local labor, nonfarm youth, women workers, full-time skilled workers, and migratory workers.

